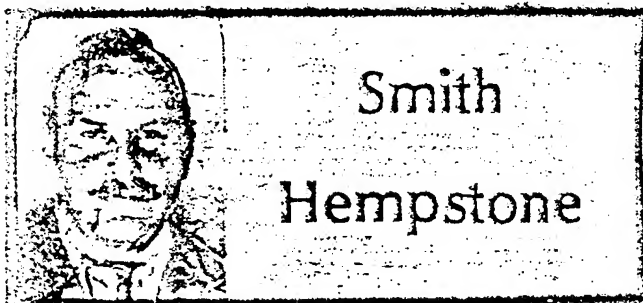


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The CIA And The Press: Denying Right To Patriotism



As everyone knows, we of the Fourth Estate burn with a bright and gemlike flame, are paragons of virtue, love dogs and children and resemble, in short, the salt of the earth.

Yet armored as we are with the ethical sensitivities of saints, we — or some of the grand panjandrums who presume to speak for us — fear some among us might be so morally depraved as, on occasion, to serve our country.

The villain in this tiresome morality play is, of course; that ol' debil CIA, which — unlike HEW, State, the Department of Agriculture or any other instrument of government — is ceaselessly plotting to use us for its own nefarious purposes, to the detriment of the First Amendment (all please genuflect) and the contamination of the well of truth.

Indeed, Adm. Stansfield Turner, the current Spook Master, recently had the brass to tell American editors assembled here for their annual conclave that, in his three years in office, he had on as many occasions personally authorized the use of American journalists on CIA missions, although in all three instances the operations were cancelled.

From the resulting consternation, one might have thought the good admiral had advocated the carnal knowledge of minor children.

Speaking *ex cathedra*, A.M. Rosenthal, executive editor of *The New York Time* (and in his day, a distinguished foreign correspondent), thundered that Turner had "cast doubt on the ethical position of every American correspondent abroad."

Asked by Turner why acceptance of a CIA assignment "vitally important to the nation" should make an American journalist feel "no

longer free," Gene Patterson, editor of *The St. Petersburg Times*, promised to clarify the director's moral obtuseness by hurling anathemas from the editorial pages of his newspaper.

"Journalists," *The New York Times* explained to its readers a few days later — not "some," or "many" or "most," just "journalists" (when Abe speaks, he speaks for us all) "want a law passed to prohibit the CIA from using employees of American news organizations for intelligence purposes."

This is necessary, *The Times* patiently pointed out, because even the faintest suspicion that one foreign correspondent might be playing James Bond could cause the news sources of all to dry up, and indeed might endanger the lives of newsmen.

Fortunately, if logic does not desert us, we are in a position to examine these suppositions.

One might ask, in the first place, if the revelation in 1974 by then-CIA director William Colby that a handful of journalists had been used for intelligence purposes caused any American correspondent in any land difficulty in gaining access to news sources.

One rather thinks not, for the simple reason that in hostile areas of the world foreign newsmen of all nationalities generally are *presumed* to be spies.

The second question one might ask is: After Colby's successor, George Bush, in 1976 issued a blanket prohibition against the use of American newsmen, did the access to their sources of these newsmen improve?

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